

To: History Social Science Framework committee

From: A concerned citizen

RE: Recommendation for amendments:

I urge you to revise the current draft of the History/Social Science Framework to include a more adequate recording of the history of California and the nation by including the significant contributions of Mexicans and Mexican Americans to this history. You really can't have a fair and balanced history without including more information on this topic. Latinos comprise nearly 39% of the state population, and descendants of Mexican Americans and Latinos now constitute over 52% of the students in our schools. These students deserve to learn their own history. I recommend extension of the description of the Chicano movement to more adequately address this issue.

Recommended additions: **Line 1959. Page 348.**

The Chicano Movement emerged as an instance in the historical trajectory of Mexican American political activism. Like its immediate antecedent, the Black Power Movement, it was constructed in opposition to the pacifist and integrationist rhetoric of the Civil Rights Movement of the 1940s and 1950s. By the mid-1960s Chicano youth challenged the old, integrationist orientations of their predecessors. The Chicano Movement, however, was not a unified entity. It was multi-stranded and broadly diverse, with many internal fissures and local correlations. In its idealized form, the Chicano Movement, hoped to link people through goals, culture, and perceived notions of community. Chicanos across the Southwest and beyond, demanded change to their subordinate standing in the U.S. They argued, that like African Americans, they had suffered discrimination and systematic oppression. Today, it remains unmatched in its ability to reach an ethnic population across a vast geographic region.

The Chicano Movement began in 1965 in Delano, California when Dolores Huerta and Cesar E. Chávez, founders of the National Farm Workers Association (later it became the United Farm Workers union), led a national boycott against table grape growers in the region because they failed to recognize their collective bargaining rights. Chávez, the president of the farm

workers union, and the farm worker struggle, became the face of Chicano protest and struggles. While the United Farm Workers union brought national and even international recognition to the plight of Chicanos for labor rights, it had overarching consequences. Many young Chicanas and Chicanos felt connected to the farm worker struggle even though the majority resided in urban areas and had never themselves worked in the California agricultural industry.

An entire generation of mostly young Chicanas and Chicanos identified as an oppressed racial group and unlike their predecessors saw themselves as an “ethnic minority,” like African Americans. Although they were legally “white,” Mexican Americans had been subjected to generations of institutional and social discrimination and racism. They self-identified as Chicanas/os and claimed to be brown, not white. Copying from the African American slogans, they espoused “Brown is Beautiful!” This new generation wanted to know why, despite the wealth and power of the U.S., there was so much poverty, inequality, racism, and sexism? By 1968, the Chicano Movement had evolved from the countryside to the cities.

The first to demonstrate in mass were Chicana and Chicano high school students who walked out of their schools in protest of poor and inadequate educational conditions. On March 1, 1968, students from Wilson, Lincoln, Garfield, Belmont, and Roosevelt High Schools in East Los Angeles walked out of their high school as they grew frustrated with the administration’s inability to understand their cultural and educational needs. These were largely segregated Mexican high schools and had been neglected by the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) for some time. By week’s end, 10,000 high school and even middle school students had joined the Walkouts. The students outlined a list of 36 demands which they presented to the LAUSD Board of Directors. Some of these demands included: the hiring of Chicana/o teachers and administrators, formation of Chicano Studies courses, culturally sensitive teachers, and bilingual education. Unfortunately, these students were met by a brutal police backlash. When the parents of these students saw that the Los Angeles Police Department began beating and arresting peaceful demonstrators it spurred them to action and they began to add pressure to the LAUSD as well. Up until this point, few young Chicanas/os had engaged in this type of demonstration. They believed in change and hoped for a better tomorrow for those themselves and those that followed.

--Regards,
--Mark Dempsey